# The Eastern Echo

Tuesday, October 22, 2024 | Volume 141, Issue 10 — Serving EMU and Ypsilanti since 1881

**SAE Baja Racers**
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**Bobcat Bonnie's closes its doors after five years in Ypsilanti.** *The Eastern Echo*

# Bobcat Bonnie's closes permanently and agrees to severance pay for Ypsilanti workers

***AnnaBelle Favre***
***News Reporter***

On Sunday, Oct. 13, after dinner service, employees of the Bobcat Bonnie's in Ypsilanti received notice by email from management that all operations would be closed until further notice. Knowing that the lease for their building would expire in two weeks, employees were not hopeful for a reopening date.

The management decided to suspend operations at the Ypsilanti location to investigate concerns raised in a petition that the employees had delivered on Oct. 7. This petition was signed by over 90% of Bobcat Bonnie's staff and made demands about pay, scheduling, training and inappropriate behavior.

Employees at the Ypsilanti location had been receiving paychecks days late after begging for them, and when they went to cash their checks, they had bounced.

The staff also aired a complaint about their inconsistent schedules. Hours had been cut, days had been switched, and shifts were consistently understaffed without any communication from management.

Workers also explained they would no longer tolerate inappropriate comments and conversations from management to staff about other employees, claiming it bred a toxic workplace. Each of these demands were paired with a date to comply, and these dates have all since passed.

After the statement of closure, Bobcat Bonnie's workers banded together once again to demand what they deserved.

They created an Instagram account, calling themselves Bobcats United, that shared their petition, explained their story, and called employees to action. This account was quickly shared, and now community members follow in support.

On this Instagram page, workers announced there would be an emergency picket line in front of the Ferndale Bonnie's location October 17-20 during all open hours. The goal of this picket line was to show management that they are still fighting for their rights as workers, and now are having to fight for their jobs back. They asked either for the store to reopen, or for two weeks of severance pay for the entire staff.

During this picket, employees encouraged community members to show their support by joining the picket or going to their local Bobcat Bonnie's and tipping generously. Staff was careful to explain that this picket was not a boycott, and they still need community support to help with their demands.

On Oct. 18 after day two of the emergency picket line, Bobcat Bonnie's owner Matt Buskard came to an agreement with the Ypsilanti employees to offer two weeks of severance pay, and he announced that the Ypsilanti location would not be reopening.

Buskard then released a statement stating, "Now that the picketing has concluded at the Bobcat Bonnie's Ferndale location and we have an agreement, I want to thank the Bobcat United group for keeping things civil and professional while we negotiated a severance package for the impacted Ypsilanti workers. Going forward, the management team and I are dedicated to listening to all of our employees as we work together to create a fun and inviting dining experience for our guests. I am looking forward to implementing quite a few changes across the board at Bobcat Bonnie's restaurants effective immediately. Your feedback will be very important to me. Please come have a meal soon at Bobcat Bonnie's in Corktown, Ferndale, Grand Rapids, Wyandotte, and Lansing, so that you can meet our team where they are happiest ,Äî on the job and making money."

Bobcat United made a statement explaining that they are satisfied with Buskard's efforts to make things right with the employees at the Ypsilanti restaurant, but they encourage him to continue addressing the grievances made on the petition to make things better for the employees at other locations. The picket was called to a stop, and workers were satisfied with the severance that they were offered.

Employees at Bobcat Bonnie's were proud to have made a stand and to achieve severance: a rare opportunity for a small restaurant chain. The Ypsilanti staff may have to find other jobs, but they remain loyal to Bobcats United, and invite all Bobcat Bonnie's employees to reach out to the Ypsi staff for help with their own grievances.

Staff encouraged the community to continue visiting the other restaurant locations and show the employees support. They are pleased with the waves they have made in the food service industry, and encourage everyone to be kind to their servers and always leave a generous tip.

# EMU suspends professor amid publicity over criminal sexual conduct investigation

***Hunter Johnstone***
***News Reporter***

Eastern Michigan University suspended the director of the EMU Coatings Research Institute on Oct.15, following his appearance on an online investigative program on the streaming service TruBlu.

TruBlu focuses on criminal investigations, including a show called "Takedown with Chris Hansen." Hansen is a former correspondent for Dateline ABC, who previously served as the host of the program "To Catch a Predator."

In an episode uploaded to TruBlu on Oct. 10, Professor Vijay Mannari visited a home in Huron Township, Michigan, where Hansen and the Genesee Human Oppression Strike Team had set up a sting operation.

The strike team is a multi-county law enforcement task force based in Genesee County. The task force was created in 2019 by Genesee County Sheriff Christopher Swanson. On its website, the task force stated that it has arrested more than 150 individuals on charges ranging from human trafficking to criminal sexual conduct.

Genesee County and GHOST Officers did respond to requests for comment regarding the TruBlu episode in Huron Township. On Saturday, Oct. 19, Mark Hindelang, a Wayne County prosecutor, said that the incident is under review in the county prosecutor's office.

In the TruBlu video, Hansen is seen talking to a task force officer about a series of cell phone texts involving a 15-year-old girl, who was actually a law enforcement agent. Hansen and the officer talking in the TruBlu video accused Mannari of sending sexually explicit texts to that 15-year-old before he arrived at the house.

The published video shows that officers prevented Mannari from leaving the home and placed him in handcuffs. Then Mannari sat down and talked to Hansen.

In EMU's statement, posted on the university's website, Vice President for Communications Walter Kraft said, "The actions the individual is accused of are detestable and abhorrent, and stand against everything the University stands for."

In addition to being suspended, the university statement said Mannari was "barred from campus, denied access to University email, and prohibited from any further contact with the University or students."

University officials said they are not aware of any allegations with Mannari involving students or staff. In the statement, university officials also said, "We take these matters very seriously, as the safety and well-being of our campus community is our top priority."

Mannari has taught at Eastern since 2003 and became a full professor in 2012. In addition to being the director of the coatings institute, he had been serving as interim director of the School of Engineering.

The Eastern Echo

*The Eastern Echo* serves the Eastern Michigan University and Ypsilanti-area communities as an independent student-operated newspaper. Founded in 1881 as The Normal News, The Echo distributes weekly printed editions on campus and throughout the surrounding community during the fall and winter academic semesters; and publishes year-round on the web. Contents are subject to copyright and may not be reproduced without prior written consent of the newspaper.

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## THE ECHO MISSION

***The Eastern Echo informs the Eastern Michigan University and Ypsilanti community by highlighting newsworthy content in a fair, accurate and timely manner.***

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## PICK UP A COPY

Print editions published Tuesdays from late August to early May are available in racks or on tables in all academic buildings on the EMU campus, and at dozens of businesses in the community.

Among those businesses are:

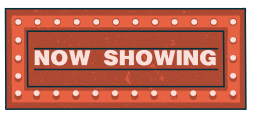
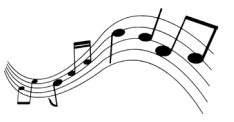
- Sweetwaters on Cross St
- The Wurst Bar
- Blackstone Bookstore
- and more!

Want to have copies of The Eastern Echo delivered to your Ypsilanti business? Email advertising@easternecho.com!

## CORRECTIONS

The Eastern Echo corrects mistakes. If we got it wrong, we want to make it right. Errors should be brought to the attention of the Editor-in-Chief by email: editor@easternecho.com

# Weekly Calendar

| TUESDAY, OCTOBER 22 | WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 23 | THURSDAY, OCTOBER 24 | FRIDAY, OCTOBER 25 | SATURDAY, OCTOBER 26 | SUNDAY, OCTOBER 27 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| NATIONAL TRANSFER STUDENT MOVIE NIGHT! PRAY HARROLD 204 7 P.M. - 12 A.M.   | NATIONAL TRANSFER STUDENT TRICK-OR-TREAT STUDENT CENTER BALLROOM A 11 A.M. - 2 P.M. PUBLIC SPEAKING WORKSHOP WITH THE HOLMAN SUCCESS CENTER HALLE LIBRARY G09 6P.M. - 7:30 P.M | AMPLIFYING THE ARTS' CREATIVE CONNECTIONS STUDENT CENTER 300 6 P.M. - 8:00 P.M. NATIONAL TRANSFER STUDENT WEEK TAKE OVER HALLE LIBRARY 6 P.M. - 9 P.M. | NATIONAL TRANSFER WEEK PAINT YOUR OWN POTTERY GLAZE, 36 N HURON 7 P.M. - 10:30 P.M. ADULTING 101: CAR MAINTENANCE HONORS COLLEGE 4 P.M. - 5 P.M. | LONG POND REVISITED: THE SONGS OF LORI LAITMAN THE HONORS COLLEGE AUDITORIUM 7:30 P.M. - 8:30 P.M. | WILLIAM STEWART CONCERTO COMPETITION PEASE AUDITORIUM 3 P.M. - 5:30 P.M.  |

# Scoop's Forecast

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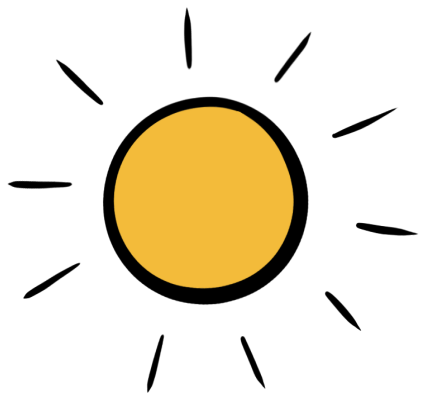
|---|---|---|---|
| 76° | | 51° | **Tuesday, Oct. 22** |
| 65° | | 36° | **Wednesday, Oct. 23** |
| 60° | | 38° | **Thursday, Oct. 24** |
| 61° | | 41° | **Friday, Oct. 25** |
| 61° | | 36° | **Saturday, Oct. 26** |
| 56° | | 37° | **Sunday, Oct. 27** |
| 64° | | 43° | **Monday, Oct. 28** |



EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

# What's the move?

## National Transfer Student Week Oct. 22-28

*Hunter Johnstone*
*News Reporter*

Check out these events happening on Eastern Michigan University's campus this week.

**"We Are Speaking:" Gender, Race, and Voting in the 2024 Elections - Oct. 21**

Attend a free panel to discuss the main topics of this election. The panel is LBC credit approved and will be in Strong Hall Room 100 from 4-5:30 p.m.

**From Lab to Life: A Chemistry Career Exploration Event - Oct. 21**

Explore career opportunities in chemistry at Mark Jefferson Science Complex Room 152 from 3:30-5:30 p.m.

**National Transfer Student Movie Night - Oct. 22**

As a part of National Transfer Student Week, enjoy a free double feature of The Addams Family. The films will be screened in Pray-Harrold Room 204 from 7 p.m. to 12 a.m.

**National Transfer Student Trick-or-Treat - Oct. 23**

As a part of National Transfer Student Week, meet different student organizations on campus in Student Center Ballroom A from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

**Public Speaking Workshop with The Holman Success Center- Oct. 23**

Earn LBC credit and learn art of creating and delivering a compelling speech. The workshop will be in Halle Library Room G09 from 6-7:30 p.m. Register here.

**Amplifying the Arts' Creative Connections - Oct. 24**

See artists showcase their talents and build connections. Located in Student Center Room 300 from 6-8:00 p.m.

**National Transfer Student Week Take Over - Oct. 24**

As part of National Transfer Student Week, join your fellow transfer students and hang out with them while having some popcorn. It will be held in Halle Library from 6-9 p.m.

**National Transfer Week Paint Your Own Pottery - Oct. 25**

As part of National Transfer Student Week, paint your own pottery at Glaze, located at 36 N Huron from 7-10:30 p.m. Spots are limited; you must RSVP by 10/21 at the latest.

**Adulting 101: Car Maintenance - Oct. 25**

Learn how to check and maintain critical components of your vehicle. The event is open to the public and located in the Honors College from 4-5 p.m. Register here.

**Long Pond Revisited: The Songs of Lori Laitman - Oct. 26**

Watch The School of Music & Dance voice faculty present the songs of American composer, Lori Laitman at The Honors College Auditorium. The event is LBC credit approved and runs from 7:30-8:30 p.m.

**William Stewart Concerto Competition - Oct. 27**

Attend a performance hosted by the EMU Bands. Located in Pease Auditorium from 3-5:30 p.m.

**Gender in the Election panel - Oct. 28**

Hear from a panel featuring Congresswoman Debbie Dingell, Provost Rhonda Longworth, and students and faculty members about the role of gender in this historic election. The event is LBC credit approved and will be from 3-4:30 p.m. in Strong Room 100.

# The Echo Q&A Series: SAE Baja Race Club President Dan DiGiovannantonio

*Max Smith*
*Staff Writer*

Walking into Sill Hall at Eastern Michigan on a Friday afternoon, it's easy to get lost in the long corridors of one of the most technologically advanced buildings on campus. A class, or a visit with a professor might be the draw. Or, like some, the lure is the sight of a car with the engine exposed sitting downstairs near the roundabout entrance. A little farther down the hall and to the right, is the home of the Eastern Michigan Baja SAE Racing Club and its president, New Jersey native Daniel DiGiovannantonio. The team is working on its Baja off-road racer in a garage that doesn't quite feel like it should be only two or three doors down from the 3D printing room.

Organized by the Society of Automotive Engineers, the International Baja SAE challenges college engineering students to build small, off-road cars that can withstand harsh elements and rough terrain. The vehicles produced often resemble dune buggies.

On a recent Friday afternoon, DiGiovannantonio offered a tour of the garage, and some thoughts about the project.

**Daniel DiGiovannantonio (left), graduates Kara Bishop (left-middle) Timothy Melcher (right of car), and current officers Travis Kurth and Blake Hodges gather around their Baja Racer before the race in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, on May 12, 2024.** *Courtesy of Andrew Mansfield, BAJA SAE Club Faculty Advisor*

**Q:** So, what does the Baja Club do? And, on what races does the team focus?

**DiGiovannantonio:** The Baja Club is designing and building a car this year for the race in Mechanicsville, Maryland, on June 12. Baja SAE usually has about three races: one spring, one summer, one fall. The fall race was actually just held up in Mount Holly, [Michigan,] but we decided to choose the summer race that was next closest to us. We usually only do about one a year.

**Q:** What does preparation for a race require?

**DiGiovannantonio:** Baja racing is ultimately about going as fast as you can for as long as you can. We have to sort of work around some things and find the material that is the lightest, cheapest, and the best fit to make our car.

**Q:** Do you drive it?

**DiGiovannantonio:** [Laughs] We don't technically have anyone able to drive it right now. Our car was designed for a previous driver who was 5-foot-5 and the seat belt needs to be adjusted for proper safety on taller drivers.

**Q:** So what brought you to the Baja Club here at Eastern?

**DiGiovannantonio:** I joined the club because I had an interest in automotive engineering. I went out of my way to apply to schools that only had a Baja team with the intention of joining, and it's been extremely rewarding.

**Q:** How long have you been here at Eastern, and in the club?

**DiGiovannantonio:** I transferred here [to Eastern] last year, and I joined in September. I worked on various projects, mostly with the controls. I was elected president for this year, and I chose to accept and make my project and research about the drivetrain.

**Q:** What kind of project?

**DiGiovannantonio:** The mechanical engineering seniors from my class all came together and joined the club in some officer roles and we are using the drivetrain as our senior capstone project. We're going to be working on looking at how various friction elements effect power loss and conversion.

**Q:** What's your favorite memory of the club, something that you've done?

**DiGiovannantonio:** That would be completing my first machining process for the gas pedal. It was the first time I'd really ever metal worked and it was very fulfilling to see it through to completion.

**Q:** Do you need to be in the mechanical engineering major to join?

**DiGiovannantonio:** No, we actually have a few officer positions for non-majors, you need to be shop trained by our faculty advisor though. Usually that happens one or two times a semester so make sure to check out our Discord for information on that. The flyer is located throughout Sill Hall or in front of our room, Sill Hall 111.

The BAJA SAE Club is one of many on-campus clubs sponsored by GameAbove, which provides grants for the team's equipment and travel costs. Students in the club have the opportunity in June to travel to Mechanicsville, Maryland, where the hard work they've put in throughout the year building the racer will give them networking opportunities with such companies as Polaris and Williamsport

That leaves around eight months for the team to redesign and refit the driver's compartment and seat, and work out the kinks -- such as the rear suspension wrapping around itself when the car isn't under load. For all the fun they have, it is still an endurance race, and safety is paramount.

# Alum Pat O'Connor makes impact in first game with Lions, defeating Vikings

*Elena Davis*
*Sports Editor*

Pat O'Connor, a former Eastern Michigan University football standout, made his debut for the Detroit Lions on Sunday, contributing to their 31-29 victory over the Minnesota Vikings. This was O'Connor's first game with the Lions after being signed from the practice squad to the active roster, stepping up for a defense hit hard by injuries, including the loss of Aidan Hutchinson.

In his first game with the team, O'Connor recorded two assisted tackles, providing valuable depth for the defensive line. Although he didn't log a sack or force a fumble, his presence helped stabilize a Lions defense facing tough opposition.

O'Connor's path to this moment has been marked by perseverance and hard work. As a communication major at EMU, he served as a team captain and earned First Team All-MAC honors in 2014. That season, he led the conference with 7.5 sacks and ranked fourth in tackles-for-loss, showcasing his skills as one of the top defensive linemen in the league.

Despite sitting out the 2015 season due to injury, O'Connor returned strong, earning accolades and recognition for his leadership and performance. His contributions at EMU also earned him the prestigious John E. Borowiec Most Valuable Defensive Player Award twice, solidifying his reputation as a defensive force.

*Courtesy of EMU Athletics*

After a successful college career, O'Connor was drafted by the Lions in 2017 and spent most of his NFL career with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, where he earned a Super Bowl ring. His promotion to the active roster with the Lions is a new chapter in his professional journey, offering both Detroit fans and EMU supporters the chance to cheer on one of their own.

As the Lions push forward through a challenging season, O'Connor's efforts will be key as he looks to continue making an impact on the field.

# Eagle Tips and Tales: Oct. 22-28

*Elena Davis*
*Sports Editor*

Get pumped up for this upcoming sports week, Eagles! Here's your guide to the exciting Eastern Michigan athletic events from Oct. 21-28, both at home and across the country:

**Women's Golf at Rainbow Wahine Invitational**

The EMU women's golf team will travel to the beautiful Kapolei, Hawaii, from Oct. 21-23 for the Rainbow Wahine Invitational. Competing in this all-day event, the Eagles will showcase their skills against top collegiate golfers in a stunning setting.

**Tennis at MAC Fall Individual Championship**From Oct. 24-27, the tennis team will travel to Oxford, Ohio, to compete in the Mid-American Conference (MAC) Fall Individual Championship. The competition is fierce as the Eagles look to end their fall season on a high note, and match times have yet to be announced.

**Soccer at Bowling Green**

The EMU soccer team will take on Bowling Green at 7 p.m. on Oct. 24. This MAC matchup in Bowling Green, Ohio, is a must-watch as the Eagles look to secure a crucial conference win on the road.

**Men's Golf at White Sands Invitational**

From Oct. 25-27, the men's golf team will head to Nassau, Bahamas, for the White Sands Invitational. This prestigious tournament is a chance for the Eagles to compete in paradise and make their mark against elite competition.

**Women's and Men's Cross Country at EMU Fall Classic**

On Oct. 25, the women's and men's cross-country teams will compete locally in the EMU Fall Classic. The women's team will race in Ypsilanti, while the men's team heads to Dexter, Michigan. With TBA start times, it's a great opportunity to cheer on the Eagles as they race for victory on home turf.

**Volleyball vs Ohio**

The EMU volleyball team plays Ohio at home on Oct. 25 at 6 p.m. in Ypsilanti. With conference standings on the line, this will be a crucial match for the Eagles.

**Football at Akron**

The EMU football team will travel to Akron on Oct. 26 for a conference clash against the Zips. Kickoff is set for 3:30 p.m., and fans can expect a thrilling MAC showdown as the Eagles look to continue their strong season.

**Women's Rowing at Ford Lake Shore Race**

On Oct. 26, the EMU women's rowing team will hit the water in Ypsilanti for the Ford Lake Shore Race. With race times to be announced, it's a prime chance to watch the Eagles in action as they take on regional competition.

**Swimming & Diving at Buffalo**

The swimming and diving team heads to Buffalo, New York, for a meet against the University at Buffalo on Oct. 26 at 11 a.m. The Eagles will look to make waves and secure a victory on the road.

**Soccer vs Kent State**

On Oct. 27, the EMU soccer team will host Kent State at 1 p.m. in Ypsilanti. This home-field advantage will be key as the Eagles push for a strong finish in the MAC standings.

**Women's Golf at Hurricane Invitational**

The women's golf team heads to Coral Gables, Florida, for the Hurricane Invitational on Oct. 28-29, wrapping up the month. The Eagles will compete against top teams in another all-day event, capping off a busy month of travel and competition.

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# New 'Outer Banks' season is full of treasure hunting

*Mariam Fakhreddine*
*Review Columnist*

**Review**

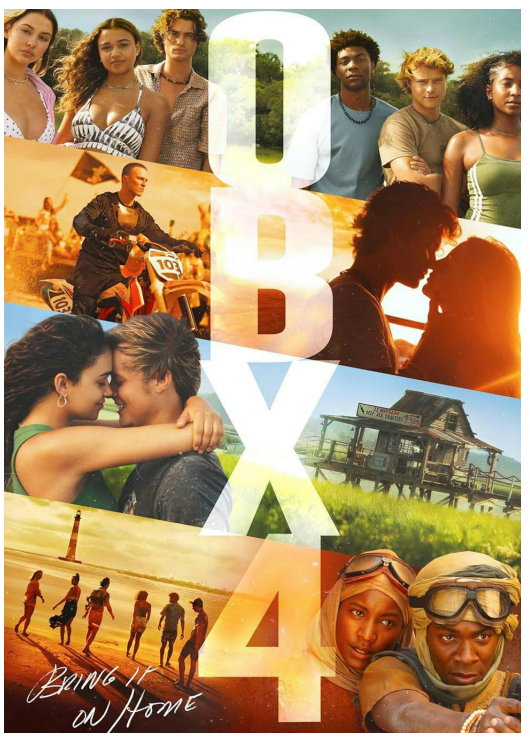
"Outer Banks" is back on Netflix with part one of its fourth season. This season was full of drama and treasure hunting. Fans were excited after waiting a year on a cliffhanger. The pogues have found a way to live after receiving over a million dollars from the gold they found. This is for a mature audience only due to the content of strong language, violence, and mature themes.

This season is about the Pogues returning to the Outer Banks after finding the gold at El Dorado. They were committed to having a "normal" life. They aimed to live together and run a bait, tackle, and charter tour shop. They called this new haven "Poguelandia 2.0." However, after having financial setbacks, they accept Wes Genrette's offer to find Blackbeard's treasure. The Pogues go on an adventure to Charleston, where they believe Blackbeard hid something important.

### Highs

The highlights of this season revolve around the adventure of going on a new treasure hunt. This keeps the audience intrigued and excited about what the Pogues will find. The episodes where they were building the bait shop were creative and successful. It shows that despite being low on money, they built a mini island together.

The friendship between all of them is strong, creating a sense of family, specifically, the




bond between John B (Chase Stokes), JJ (Rudy Pankow), and Pope (Jonathan Davis). They have been best friends for years, and their friendship is still going strong despite the mess JJ gets them into. Another high point is the relationship between Sarah (Madelyn Cline) and John B.; regardless of their obstacles, they did not give up on each other.

Another highlight is how the director captured JJ and Kiara deep in the ocean to find an abandoned ship. This was beautiful and showed the aspects of a real ship and finding treasure there.

This season's plot is another highlight, considering how many new obstacles they must overcome to get the treasure. They have had to escape multiple dangerous enemies chasing them. The enemies are Lightner and his boss lady, who are determined to get the treasure regardless of who dies.

Another high is Rafe's development into a more caring character. He regrets being on bad terms with his sister, Sarah. Rafe (Drew Starkey) is involved with a new girl this season, Sofia (Fiona Palomo), who is a Pogue. She shows him that the Kooks are horrible people.

### Lows

There are minimal lows in this new "Outer Banks" season. The main low is the Kooks' inhumane treatment of the Pogues. Topper (Austin North) used to care for Sarah and Kiara, but that soon left when he got back with the Kooks. They keep doing terrible things to the Pogues with no consequences.

Another low is Deputy Shoupe (Cullen Moss) as his character only believes that the Pogues are in trouble. He only has the officers follow them because he thinks they are lying. This creates tension for the Pogues, adding more reasons to why they do not trust the police.

Rafe taking a bad deal is a low point, considering how manipulated he becomes by his father's old friend, Hollis Robinson. She is a real estate developer after his money and plans to betray him. This creates a terrible situation for Rafe, who has had no one guiding him since his father passed.

Another low is JJ's recklessness. He does what he wants regardless of the consequences. He seems out of control this season, and his stubbornness adds stress for the Pogues. His relationship with Kiara is tense, considering how careless he can be.

### Verdict

This "Outer Banks" season is worth watching. This season is full of drama and obstacles for the Pogues to face. It takes the audience on an adventure that ends on yet another cliffhanger.

**Rating: 8 out of 10**

*Mariam Fakhreddine is a film and theater reviewer for The Eastern Echo. She has worked as a news and features reporter for The Echo for two years.*

# 'The Menendez Brothers Documentary' is a shocking and emotional account

*Mariam Fakhreddine*
*Review Columnist*

**Review**

"The Menendez Brothers Documentary" was released to Netflix on October 7. The documentary, directed by Alejandro Hartmann, was full of heartbreaking truths about the story of how the Menendez brothers, Erik and Lyle, murdered their parents; it was one of the most significant trials broadcasted.

This documentary discusses the real reason behind why the Menendez brothers murdered their parents in 1989. There are explanations from both Erik and Lyle while they are still in prison today. This documentary is from their perspective, with other guests appearing, such as the prosecutor and jurors from the original case. It takes the audience back to 1989 by showing news clips speaking on the trial. The crime scene was shown during the actual trial as well, which involved the heartbreaking story of the sexual abuse that Erik and Lyle endured from their father.

### Highs

The highlight of this documentary was the non-biased aspect; it showed the prosecutor's view and news outlets that believed the brothers did this in cold blood. At the same time, the original jurors and witnesses believed that these brothers suffered from sexual abuse and that it was imperfect self-defense. Imperfect self-defense, as explained in the film, is that the brothers thought that they were in honest danger; this can bring down a count to a felony of voluntary manslaughter.

Another highlight is how the film was put together in chronological order. It started with how the brothers came into their family and lifestyle. The director captured the true essence of the night of the murder in 1989. Pictures were presented along with recordings from the police officers that night.

The aspect of inserting the defense attorneys speaking with Erik and Lyle brought an emphasis on the situation. Having the trial in the documentary was significant, considering how Erik and Lyle both went on the stand to explain the abuse they endured from their father.

### Lows

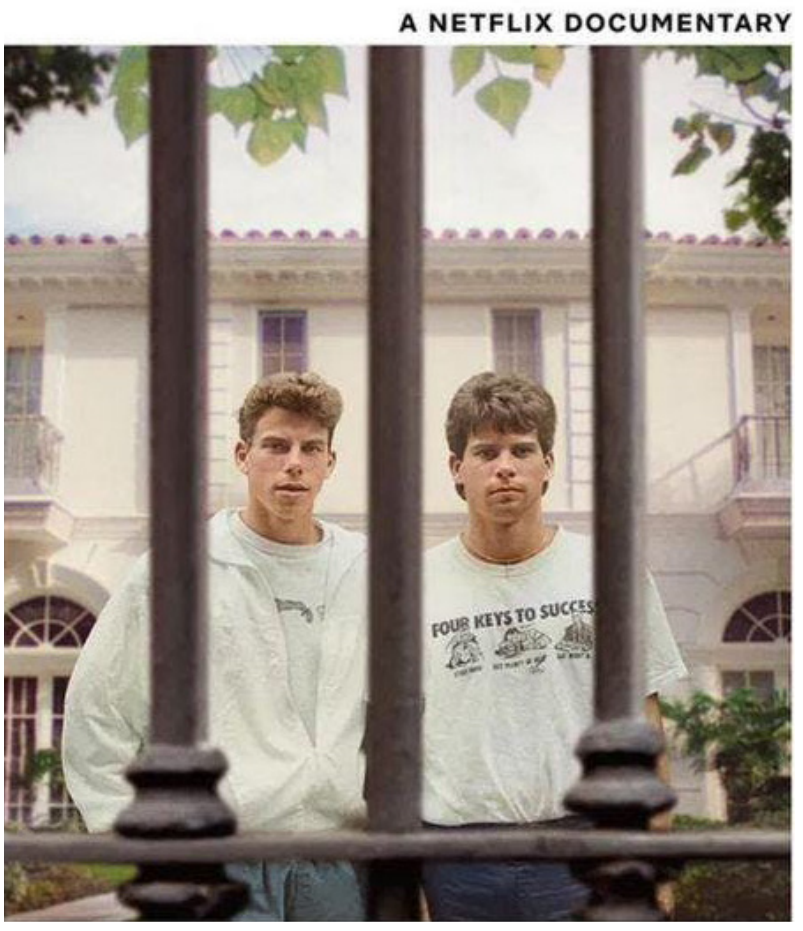
There were minimal lows when it came to this documentary. The only low was how the prosecutor was not sympathetic towards the brothers. Regardless of whether they were abused or not, she didn't accept their version of the event on how they viewed it. She seemed biased in her own opinion and was passive-aggressive in the interview.

### Verdict

"The Menendez Brothers Documentary" is worth watching, considering it is informative and shows the truth about the Menendez brothers. These brothers currently filed a petition for a habeas corpus appeal to have a retrial due to the biased judge and jury.

**Rating: 9 out of 10**

*Mariam Fakhreddine is a film and theater reviewer for The Eastern Echo. She has worked as a news and features reporter for The Echo for two years.*




# Netflix's 'Lonely Planet' is a slow burn worth the watch

*Mariam Fakhreddine*
*Review Columnist*

**Review**

"Lonely Planet," directed by Susannah Grant, was recently released on Netflix and is trending. This film features Liam Hemsworth as Owen Brophy, Laura Dern as Katherine Lowe, and Diana Silvers as Lily Kemp. It is an adventure of love and discovering the truth behind loneliness. The film is rated R due to strong language and explicit content.

This film is about novelist Katherine, who travels to Morocco to escape her writer's block in order to finish her book. During her trip to a writer's retreat, she meets Owen. He is on the retreat with his girlfriend, Lily, who is also a writer. Katherine is a loner when it comes to writing as she is determined to finish her book while the others are partying. Owen becomes lonely on this trip due to how disconnected he is from the writers since he has a job in private equity. While discovering the roads to Morocco, he runs into Katherine multiple times. They develop a close connection, which leads to a love affair.

### Highs

Hemsworth's acting is one of the highlights of this film. His character shows how much he supports his girlfriend, Lily, while she criticizes him. This is Hemsworth's first romance film in a while; he did an excellent job portraying a struggling boyfriend.

The bond between Katherine and Owen is another high because their connection is fantastic. Katherine is more of a loner towards the other writers, but she opens up to Owen during this trip. They understand each other's struggles, although their careers are pretty opposite.

The romance in this film differs from others, considering the woman is older than the man. Katherine is in her 50s while Owen is in his 30s; this shows that love has no limits. The theme in this film is another high; it shows that traveling can help people learn more about themselves and the world around them.

The setting of Morocco is another highlight because of how beautiful the writers' retreat is. The hotel is full of old architecture, and it shows the culture of the Moroccan people well. It also has people speaking Moroccan Arabic, which emphasizes the culture there.

Dern's acting as a struggling writer is another high, considering how well she shows how much writing means to her. Her character portrays humor only in front of a couple of people, showing how closed off she is to people. The chemistry and slow burn between Katherine and Owen are another high. They keep the audience watching, waiting for the moment they kiss.

### Lows

There were minimal lows in this film. The main low is Lily Kemp, Owen's girlfriend; she degrades Owen. During specific scenes, she makes passive-aggressive comments towards him. Just because he does not know particular books, she degrades his knowledge in front of everyone. This shows how careless she is; he came on the trip to support her and she doesn't appreciate him.

Another low is how all the writers are portrayed as mean and witty. They are judgemental towards people who are not writers, especially Owen. They see him as an "absent boyfriend" who has no other life besides being obsessed with work. Towards the film's middle, the fight between Owen and Lily is another low. She continues to see herself above him, and he is jealous of her because she is becoming successful. This shows that her character is self-absorbed.

### Verdict

"Lonely Planet" is worth watching for those who enjoy novelist romance. Those who love Liam Hemsworth will enjoy the shirtless scenes of him.

**Rating: 7 out 10**

*Mariam Fakhreddine is a film and theater reviewer for The Eastern Echo. She has worked as a news and features reporter for The Echo for two years.*

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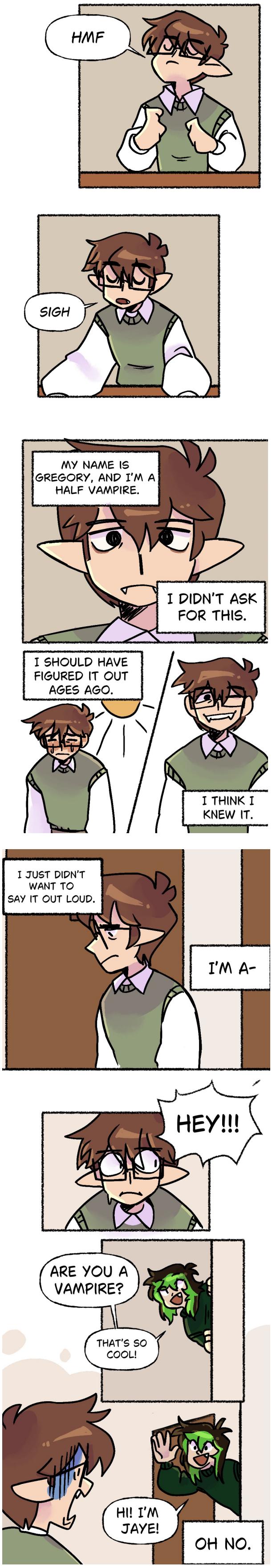


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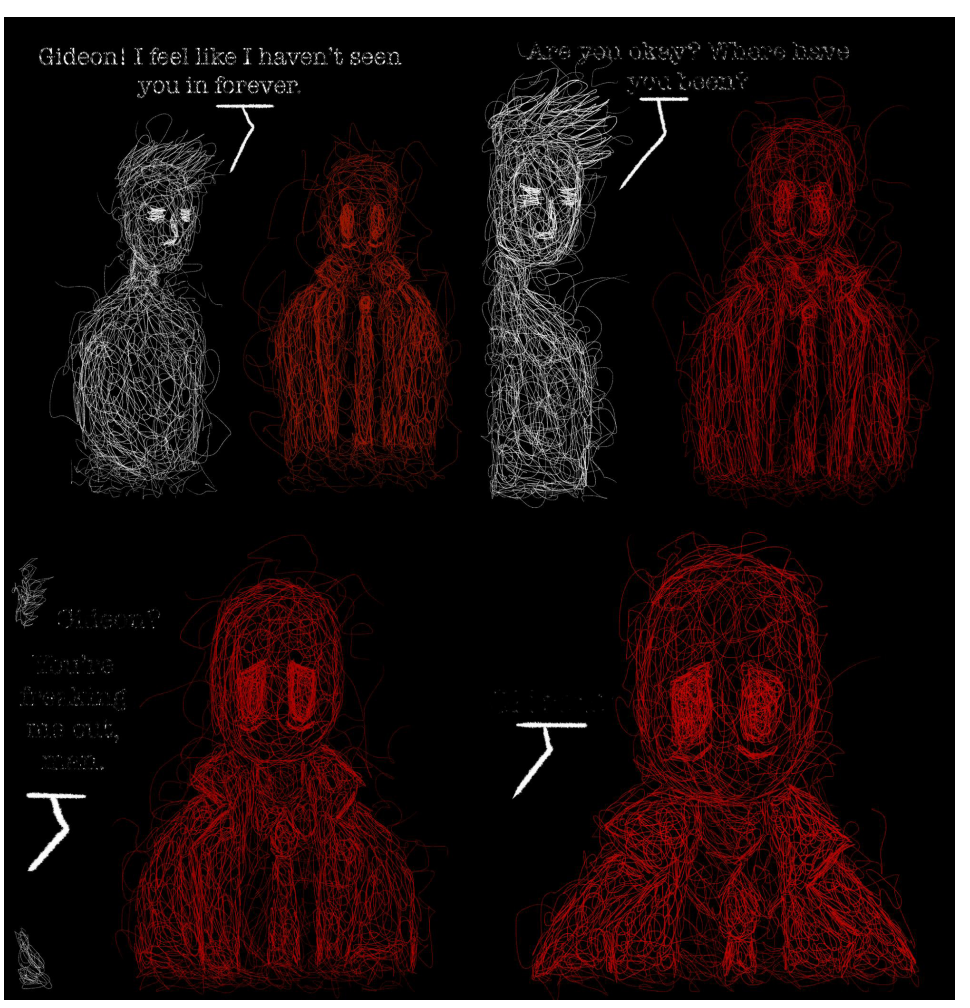


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